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MTO 23.2 Examples: Spicer, Fragile, Emergent, and Absent Tonics in Pop and Rock Songs

(Note: audio, video, and other interactive examples are only available online)

<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.17.23.2/mto.17.23.2.spicer.php>

Example 1. Daryl Hall and John Oates, “She’s Gone” (1973)

Everybody’s high on consolation
 Everybody’s trying to tell me what is right for me
 My daddy tried to bore me with a sermon
 But it’s plain to see that they can’t comfort me

Sorry Charlie for the imposition
 I think I’ve got it, I’ve got the strength to carry on
 I need a drink and a quick decision
 Now it’s up to me, ooh what will be

[CHORUS]
 She’s gone, Oh I, Oh I
 I’d better learn how to face it
 She’s gone, Oh I, Oh I
 I’d pay the devil to replace her
 She’s gone, Oh I, what went wrong?

Get up in the morning look in the mirror
 I’m worn as her toothbrush hanging in the stand
 My face ain’t looking any younger
 Now I can see love’s taken her toll on me

[CHORUS]
 [SAX SOLO]

Think I’ll spend eternity in the city
 Let the carbon and monoxide choke my thoughts away
 And pretty bodies help dissolve the memories
 But they can never be what she was to me

[CHORUS]

[INSTRUMENTAL BREAK]

[EXTENDED CHORUS]

[FADE]

INTRO VAMP

A/B B

VERSE

A/B B G#m7 C#m7 A/B

(3 times)

CHORUS

A E/G# F#m7 A/B A E/G# A/B

INSTRUMENTAL BREAK

A/B Bb/C B/C# C/D C G/B

(CHORUS) etc.

Example 2. The Four Tops, “Reach Out I’ll Be There” (1966)

INTRO Eb sus4 Ebm Bb

VERSE Abm7 (Gb) Db (Gb) Gb/Bb Gb Bb/D Fdim7 (no chord)

PRECHORUS Gb ii7 V (5 times) I6 I Eb: V6 VII5

CHORUS Bb Eb/Bb Ebm Bb

Eb: V I'll be there) I6 (1) i V
 (Reach out _____ Reach out _____)

Example 3. Elton John, “Someone Saved My Life Tonight” (1975)

a) Signature introductory piano riff

b) Harmonic reduction

INTRO

Ab/Eb D_b Ab/Eb D_b

VERSE

D_b Ab/C G_b/B_b D_b/A_b G_b A_b D_b D_bm B_b7 D_b B_b/D A_b/E_b E_b

CHORUS

D_b A_b/C B_bm A_b/C D_bm7 A_b/C D_b B_b/D A_b/E_b B_b7/F D_b B_b/D A_b/E_b C7 D_b A_b/C B_bm G_b

(... fly away, high away!)

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Example 4. Prince, “Little Red Corvette” (1982)

VERSE

8

G \flat (6̇) A \flat (7̇) B \flat m (1̇) G \flat M7

I guess I should have known by the way you parked your car—side-ways— that it would-n't last (etc.)

CHORUS

G \flat (6̇) A \flat (7̇) D \flat (1̇)

lit - tle red— Cor - vette!—

The image displays a musical score for the song "Little Red Corvette" by Prince. It is divided into two sections: the Verse and the Chorus. Both sections are written in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat major/D-flat minor). The time signature is 4/4. The Verse begins with a measure rest marked with an 8, followed by the lyrics "I guess I should have known by the way you parked your car—side-ways— that it would-n't last (etc.)". The Chorus begins with a measure rest marked with an 8, followed by the lyrics "lit - tle red— Cor - vette!—". Above the staff, guitar chords are indicated: G \flat (6̇), A \flat (7̇), B \flat m (1̇), and G \flat M7 for the Verse; and G \flat (6̇), A \flat (7̇), and D \flat (1̇) for the Chorus. The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes.

Example 5. Possible harmonic-functional interpretations of some oscillating two-chord vamps

I ii I vi ii V I II[#]?
 bVII i bIII i i IV bVII I
 IV V
 bVI bVII
 bIII IV

Example 6. Two songs built on a shuttle of two major chords with roots lying a whole step apart

a) Jane's Addiction, "Jane Says" (1988)

(5̂) (1̂)
 Jane says, "I'm done with Serg - i - o." —
 G5 A G5 A

b) The [Detroit] Spinners, "I'll Be Around" (1972)

(5̂) (1̂)
 This is our fork in the road —
 EM7 F#add6 EM7 (etc.)

Example 7. The Human League, “Human” (1986), main progression (the “Sisyphus effect”)

The image displays a musical score for the main progression of the song "Human" by The Human League (1986). The score is written in 4/4 time and features a "Sisyphus effect," where a sequence of chords repeats every four measures. The progression consists of six measures, with the first measure being a whole note chord and the subsequent five measures being half notes. The chords and their corresponding Roman numerals are as follows:

- Measure 1: $D^{\flat}M9$ (Roman numeral: IV_7^9)
- Measure 2: E^{\flat} (Roman numeral: V)
- Measure 3: $Fm7$ (Roman numeral: vi_7^{\flat})
- Measure 4: E^{\flat}/G (Roman numeral: V^6)
- Measure 5: A^{\flat} (Roman numeral: I)
- Measure 6: $D^{\flat}M9$ (Roman numeral: IV_7^9)

The score includes a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass line is marked with a 4/4 time signature. The chords are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff, and the chord symbols are written above the staff. The notes are written in a way that illustrates the "Sisyphus effect," with the first measure being a whole note chord and the subsequent five measures being half notes.

Example 8. Two songs with potentially viable Lydian openings

a) Fleetwood Mac, "Sara" (1979)

b) R.E.M., "Man on the Moon" (1992)

VERSE

C D C C

More the Hoo - ple and the game of Life...
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah... (etc.)

PRECHORUS

Am G Am G Am G Am G D D

Now An-dy did you hear a-bout this one?

CHORUS

G Am C Bm G Am D G Am C Bm Am Am

If you be- lieved they put a man on the moon...
man on the moon...

Example 9. Two songs by the Psychedelic Furs

a) "The Ghost in You" (1984)

PRECHORUS

VERSE

CHORUS

b) "Love My Way" (1982)

INTRO (and VERSE)

Musical score for the Intro (and Verse) of "Love My Way". The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a synth accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a fermata on the first measure, followed by the lyrics "Love my way, it's a new road". The synth accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand. The bass line starts on C5 and moves to B5. A fermata is placed over the final two notes of the synth part. The word "8va ..." is written above the first measure of the synth part, indicating an octave shift. The word "SYNTH" is written below the synth part.

Musical score for the Chorus of "Love My Way". The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It features a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a fermata on the first measure, followed by the lyrics "Love my way, it's a new road". The guitar accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand. The bass line starts on C and moves to D. A fermata is placed over the final two notes of the guitar part. The word "CHORUS" is written above the first measure of the vocal line. The word "C" is written below the first measure of the guitar part, and "D" is written below the second measure. The word "C (etc.)" is written below the final measure of the guitar part. The number "8" is written above the first measure of the vocal line, indicating an octave shift.

Example 10. Three recent #1 hits built on a repeating four-bar groove

a) Coldplay, "Viva la Vida" (2008)

VERSE

I used to rule the world, scars would rise when I gave the word

Chords: D₉ (no 3rd), E₅7sus₄, A_b, F_m

b) Carly Rae Jepsen, "Call Me Maybe" (2012)

CHORUS

Hey, I just met you, and this is crazy, but here's my number, so call me maybe.

Chords: C, (G), D, (Em), C, (G), D

c) Daft Punk, "Get Lucky" (2013)

LOOP

Piano (3)

Electric bass

Bm7 D F#m7 2 E (1 ?)

VERSE

E Bm7 D F#m7 E

Like the le-gend of—the phoe - nix, all ends with— be- gin - nings,

PRECHORUS

Bm7 D F#m7 E

We've come too far— to give up— who we are—

CHORUS

Bm7 D F#m7 E

She's up— all night 'til the sun, I'm up— all night to get some, she's up— all night for good fun, I'm up— all night to get— luck-y.

Example 11. Michael Jackson, "Rock With You" (1979)

INTRO (and CHORUS)

Em9 Ab/Bb Bb Ebm9 Ab/Bb Cb/Db Ebm9 Ab/Bb Bb Gb/Ab Ab

VERSE

Em9 Gb/Ab Ab/Bb GbM7 Fm7 CbM7 Gb/Ab

PRECHORUS

feel that heat and we can ride the boo-gie. Share that heat of love. I wan-na rock with you (etc.)

BRIDGE

Bbm Eb9 (V⁹ of V²) Gbm7 Db/F Cbm7 Gb/Ab

END of INSTRUMENTAL BREAK into the FINAL CHORUS

Ab/Bb Bb/C Cb/Db C/D Em9 A/B B (etc.)

Example 12. Stevie Wonder, "Ribbon in the Sky" (1982)

VERSE

Ebm7 Fm7 Fm7/Bb

(3 times)

REFRAIN

Rib-bon in the sky for our love...

Rib-bon in the sky for our love...

Ebm7 Gb/Ab CbM9 Gb/Ab Ebm7 Gb/Ab Db